



Town of North Andover Quarterly Newsletter

News from the School Department

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Vision for the Strategic District Improvement Planning Process

Christopher Hottel, Superintendent of Schools

Over the past two years, many significant initiatives have been launched in the North Andover Schools. These initiatives have been driven by different forces, but have one purpose in common. This purpose is to foster the success and achievement of our students. To this end, we need to build the programs and resources to carry out the mission of the North Andover Public Schools, which is to "cultivate a respectful community of engaged learners, insightful thinkers, and effective communicators."

This year, the central vision of our teachers, administrators, and staff will focus on engaged learning. What does it mean to create a classroom with engaged learners, and what does an engaged classroom look like? What are teachers doing, what are students doing? We all are familiar with what classrooms have been traditionally. Traditionally, classrooms are structured with teachers imparting information and students sitting, listening, answering questions, or taking tests. For some time now, this picture of a classroom has been changing. Instructional techniques, such as smaller group learning or the use of computers to assist learning, have played a role in helping educators respond with new approaches for engaging students.

Today, these incremental changes have become only a part of a transformation that is taking place under the pressure and direction of changes in society, in the nature of interpersonal relationships and, most recently, in the wide-ranging applications of information technology in our daily lives. And these changes are, of course, inter-related. Many would argue that the role of technology in accessing and using information, in making responsible decisions, and in setting new and challenging boundaries in the realm of social interaction, has become paramount.

As an educational system, we need to lead the way in responding to this transformation that is taking place around us in how knowledge is accessed, learned, and shared. Our primary responsibility is the growth and development of our students, and this growth and development can only be enhanced by better engaging our students. To ensure that we are leading the way for our community, we need to think, reflect, and plan together for our needs.

When I arrived as Superintendent two years ago, I conducted a series of entry interviews with stakeholders in the community and the schools. I asked these leaders to tell me what they thought were the strengths, the challenges, the opportunities, and the expectations of the North Andover School system. Their responses centered around three areas: (1) setting high, aspirational goals for everyone in our schools, staff and students, (2) expanding communication, and (3) targeting resources for student achievement and student success. I believe that with our current leadership, and with the direction set by our School Committee, we are putting in place "stretch" goals, enhanced communication, and high standards of achievement.

Now it is time to expand our planning for further improvement. We have an opportunity in developing a meaningful and robust District Improvement Plan to join together to create the

action steps that will build our vision of 21st century teaching and learning. To do this, I am launching today a district improvement planning process that will take place between September and December. We will be using the *District Standards and Indicators*, and the *Conditions for School Effectiveness*, published last year by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These are the standards by which school districts in Massachusetts are reviewed and evaluated by the state. We will be forming six working committees, one for each standard, to analyze requirements and current status, develop specific action steps, and then to report to a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will compile the results of the standards committees and report to the School Committee at its meeting of December 1st. For the standards committees, we are seeking the participation of community members, town board members, parents, teachers and school staff in general. The time commitment will be four two-hour work sessions between the second week of September and Thanksgiving.

The action steps that we envision emerging from the process will create the visionary focus and the communication tool by which we will both align current initiatives, such as the expansion of the elementary libraries and the growth of the Building Respectful Communities program, and create the roadmap for bold new initiatives that might include such resources as universal connectivity and 1-to-1 computing, and a new focus on what resources are absolutely necessary for teaching and learning.

We anticipate that the resulting 3-Year District Improvement Plan will be used by the School Committee and administration as we develop our operating budget and our Capital Improvement Needs. In addition, the plan will be used by school principals and school councils to develop the 2012-13 School Improvement Plans. What we hope and trust this strategic effort will not result in is simply another document that gathers dust on a shelf. Instead, this will be a living guide that all staff will be familiar with and will set a direction for changing and energizing the course of learning in North Andover.

You will be hearing more about this development and the planning process in upcoming School Committee meetings and in newsletters. Principals and other leaders will be soliciting the participation of teachers, parents, and support staff. As Superintendent, I will be contacting board members and other community members to solicit participation.

This is an exciting project that the administration has been planning together over the summer. Each member of our leadership team, headed by Dr. Hutchinson and myself, is fully committed to making this process a success, and to using it as a foundation to carry out our mission to ensure the preparation and success of our students in North Andover.



News from the Town Clerk's Office

**IT IS NEVER TOO EARLY TO PLAN FOR 2012 ELECTIONS!
YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT TO US.
PLEASE BE CERTAIN TO NOTIFY US OF ADDRESS
CHANGES OR IF YOU ARE NEW TO NORTH ANDO-
VER THAT YOU HAVE REGISTERED TO VOTE**

There are four scheduled elections and an Annual Town Meeting scheduled for 2012. The elections are March 6, 2012 Presidential Primary Election, March 27, 2012 Annual Town Election, State Primary Election September 18, 2012 and the Presidential Election on November 6, 2012. Our Annual Town Meeting will be held in May or June. It is important to verify your voter and party status for all elections and especially primary elections. If you are enrolled in a Party – Democratic, Republican, or Green-Rainbow you must choose that ballot. If you are an "Unenrolled Voter" (Registered Voter-No party affiliation) you may choose one of any party ballot. You do not become enrolled in that party by choosing a ballot. You may change your party affiliation at any time.

Absentee ballots are available for all elections. You can apply for all elections during a calendar year. Forms are available from our web site at www.townofnorthandover.com, in the Town Clerk's Office, or by sending us a note requesting a ballot. You may vote by absentee ballot if you will be absent from town during normal polling hours, have a physical disability preventing you from going to the polling place, or religious belief. We encourage early submittal of requests

especially for students who will be out of state or out of the country. Voters who travel and may be away on Election Day can also apply. If you have received absentee ballots in the past, you must re-apply each calendar year or become a permanent receiver of absentee ballots with a doctor's note.

You may vote in person at the Town Clerk's Office 120 Main Street when ballots are available. Absentee ballots are available about three weeks before an election.

Please notify the Town Clerk's Office of address changes. You may call or e-mail jbradshaw@townofnorthandover.com at any time to verify your voting status. We will mail out voter registration or absentee ballot forms to you.

Look for your 2012 Annual Town Census form in early January. Your party affiliation, voter status, and all election dates and deadlines will be included. This census information is crucial for public safety use, school planning, and in preparation for the upcoming elections.

We look forward to a busy election and Town Meeting season. Please call us at any time with questions or concerns at (978)688-9501. Visit the Town of North Andover's web site at www.townofnorthandover.com for updated information.



News from the Tax Office

View and pay your bills online using eBill

Quick facts:

- No signup cost
- Electronic transactions
- Accessible 24 hours a day
- Schedule payments
- Make multiple payments using a paynet cart
- View current and past eBill transactions
- Pay by checking/savings account
- Pay by credit card (*see website for details)
- Convenience Fee of 3% when using a credit card or .25 cents when using a checking account.

Go to
www.townofnorthandover.com
and start
paying today!

How to pay online:

- 1** Go to www.townofnorthandover.com
- 2** Click on "Online Bill Payments"
- 3** Register as a Bill Payer
- 4** Login and Pay

Easy • Convenient • Secure